The Shakespeare Newsletter

Vol. I, No. 1 *"Knowing I lov'd my books, he furnish'd me . . ."* March, 1951

King Lear on the New York Stage

King Lear, directed by John Houseman and starring Louis Calhern, received mixed reviews when it opened at the National Theatre on December 25th. Margaret Marshall (*The Nation,* 6 Jan., p. 18) found it falling "short in many ways, some of them crucial." Nevertheless it had some "solid virtues." She liked the division into three acts and the "imaginative lighting" which did "more scene-shifting than the stage hands." Disliked were the unbroken high level of "intensity" and "noise," the "garrish" setting for Act III, the "more earnest than distinguished" acting, and the improper reading of many lines. She found the production had the "negative virtue" of not exploiting its significances for our age. "Nothing, after all, is so timely as the timeless."

Wolcott Gibbs (*New Yorker,* 6 Jan., pp. 56-7) cites a friend who declared that "the brilliant success" of this production proves wrong Charles Lamb's contention that a successful production of *King Lear* is impossible. Gibbs disagrees, but admits he has *always* disliked the play. He finds the production "confused and wildly episodic." The giving of "separate life and identity" to too many characters makes the play "a sequence of more or less isolated happenings in the madhouse and the abattoir." However, he defends Shakespeare by saying that he thinks the withdrawal of the emphasis from Lear was "against the basic intention of the author."

Newsweek (8 Jan., p. 67) notes that Henry Irving and Edwin Booth have counted Lear among their failures and that Louis Calhern "manages no miracle." But at least it was removed from the shelf and imbued "with a physical passion and vigor that may surprise its armchair admirers."

Harold Curlman (*New Republic,* 22 Jan., pp. 21-2) found the play "better than most of the Shakespearean productions" he had seen for some time. He liked the reading of the lines and the unlocalized settings. But there was a "lack of a master conception" and for this reason the production seemed to him like a "pony" translation—practical but not poetic.

When the play closed on February 3 it had run for 48 performances.

[*Romeo & Juliet* will be reviewed in the April issue.]

Chairmen

I would like to send copies of *The Shakespeare Newsletter* to each member of your staff who gives electives in Shakespeare. A postcard bearing their names will bring copies by return mail.

Marchette Chute At Work

When I asked Marchette Chute what she knew of Shakespeare before she began *Shakespeare of London* she held up a thumb and forefinger in the shape of an impressive "O" and said, "Nothing." The scholar instinctively gasps—he has just spent his spare time of a full year on a single bibliographical problem--and here is a rather scholarly best-seller written from scratch in three years!

But let us go back to the beginning. Miss Chute was born in 1909, the granddaughter of a Minnesota pioneer whose ancestors came to America in the 1630's. She graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1930 after winning a poetry contest, writing a prize essay, and being elected to the Phi Beta Kappa.

After winning $500 in a national contest for some drawings and verses, and teaching at the "Y" and College Woman's Club, she went on to write her first book, *Rhymes About Ourselves* (1932). The dynamic silhouette drawings and neat lettering which she submitted to the publisher were so well done that plates were made directly from her copy without recourse to the use of type at all!

Her first scholarly book was practically a by-product. After having completed the necessary research for the 14th century teen-age book, *The Innocent Wayfarer,* she decided to do a life of Chaucer for young people. Unsatisfied with the extant lives and not caring to do an emasculated juvenile, she decided on the more ambitious project *Geoffrey Chaucer of England* which W. W. Watt in the *New Republic* called "an informal witty survey of Chaucer for literate adults who do not happen to be Chaucerians."

But there was hardly a dearth of Shakespeare biographies when Miss Chute began her Shakespearean career. Nor did this annoy her. She wanted no "theological" material, just "plain solid facts," and for these Shakespeare's contemporaries were sufficient. She read widely, sometimes twenty-five books in a morning. Her purpose was to get an "airplane view" and "keep out of the ruts." Thousands of notes were made in almost reckless profusion. At night she would type them carefully on topical sheets: Stow, Water Supply; Watermen; Clerkenwell, etc. For two and one-half years she made her notes, sometimes finding that groups of notes made at different intervals would cancel themselves out. Then she was ready to write.

The miscellaneous notes which were "held in solution" began to coalesce. Her first draft of 40,000 words was written without reference to notes at all! Only when the first draft was completed did she refer to her notes to expand her copy. The most difficult part of her work,

(*Continued on page* 3)

Shakespeare-Cervantes April 23, 1616

A Shakespeare anniversary seldom passes without some comment on the coincidence that Shakespeare and Cervantes died on the same day—April 23, 1616. This coincidence, often noted in literary histories and biographical dictionaries, appears in Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World* (Mentor Books ed. p. 40), and appeared in an advertisement of His Majesty's bookseller in the April 21, 1950 issue of the London *Times Literary Supplement.*

It should be remembered, however, that Pope Gregory XIII and his astronomers, Lilius and Clavius, revised the Julian calendar making their findings public and official in 1582. In some Catholic countries, including Spain, the calendar revisions were immediately applied and ten days were omitted so that October 15th followed on the day after October 4th. In 1585 a bill to conform the English calendar was introduced into Parliament, but the opposition to anything papal was so strong that the measure did not get a second hearing and the Julian calendar was continued in force. It was not until 1752 that the Gregorian calendar was officially adopted in England.

These changes have been the cause of the past and present confusion. Because Shakespeare died on *Tuesday,* April 23rd according to the *Old Style* Julian calendar, and Cervantes died on *Saturday,* April 23rd according to the Gregorian *New Style* calendar, it is quite inaccurate to say that their deaths accurred on the same day. Actually Shakespeare died ten days after Cervantes according to the Gregorian calendar now in use, i.e., on Friday, May 3, 1616.

George Washington and Samuel Johnson, among others, changed their birthdays to conform to the *New Style* calendar in 1752. I suppose that literary tradition is too strong to move our Shakespeare anniversaries from St. George's Day to May 3rd, but the myth that Shakespeare and Cervantes died on the same day, convenient as it is, should be forever abandoned.

Ain't Ain't Right

Dr. Mitford M. Matthews, of the *New Dictionary of Americanisms* which the University of Chicago will publish on March 30th, is quoted as authority for the statement that the word "aint" was used "as far back as Shakespeare". A sub-headline to the interview records its use by Shakespeare as a categorical fact. If this is so, Abbot, Schmidt and Bartlett were so ashamed that they failed to record it. (N. Y. Times, March 11, page 64)

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All Hail . . . !

If I may for this once abandon the editorial "we" I wish to extend to all readers a cordial hand of welcome. I have ransacked bibliographies, Works in Progress, catalogues, and the memories of friends to find you. I am certain that the *Newsletter* is being distributed to one of the largest lists of Renaissance scholars ever assembled. As teachers, students, and admirers of Shakespeare we have much in common, and this informal miscellany should bring us closer together.

I wish to make *The Shakespeare Newsletter* a friendly medium where we can all voice our ideas, opinions, discoveries, experiences, and suggestions. To make the *Newsletter* all we want it to be I wish to offer the following suggestions:

If you have written an article of Shakespearean interest which has recently appeared or has been given a date of publication, I shall appreciate receiving an offprint, or a reference to it and a brief synopsis.

Notes and comments of any kind, *explication de text,* queries, interesting statistics, notices of school or local performances, teaching experience of value, abstracts of your latest books, and original articles of about 350-400 words will be sincerely welcomed.

Shakespeare Clubs are cordially invited to send announcements and "minutes" which can be used for news releases.

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Shakespeare Amenities

Among the many compensations in teaching Shakespeare is the feeling of elation derived from reading the dozen odd pages dashed off by my students in the hurried two hours of final examination. Just look at how much they have learned! Imagine how much more they must know!

Naturally a teacher is not happy when he detects errors, but somehow I have always welcomed the levity of a "boner" which makes the reading of examinations less chore and more chortle. The following boners and bits of wisdom have appeared in examinations in the last few years:

Middleton—The town in which Shakespeare was born.

1576—Shakespeare was 12 years old.

Lost Years—Would be referred to either in *The Tempest*—the year spent on the island—or perhaps the lost years in *The Comedy of Errors.*

New Place—In plays it is told by dialogue as there are usually no scenery changes.

"On the Heights"—Place where the first theatre was built.

Quarto — Shakespeare's life has been divided into four periods. One of them is called a quarto.

Folio—A character in *Cymbeline.*

Palladis Tamia—Island off Italy which might be the scene of *The Tempest.* (I guess I had referred to Pantalleria.)

Montaigne—One of the families in *Romeo and Juliet.*

Shadow—A character in *Henry IV.*

Tiring Room—A room in Boar's Head Tavern.

Master of the Revels—Title given to Sir John Falstaff.

Olivier—Falls in love with Celia.

Pit—Shakespeare uses this in almost all his plays—man pitted against inevitable forces.

Once or twice, I have sensed an objection to "identification" questions. After **Testament of Faith** I read: "Something I lost when I was ten;" and after **Blackfriars:** "Chickens that are cooked too long." Well perhaps the recollection of minutiae does not reveal a comprehension of Shakespeare but answers do reveal something. What do we learn of the fair coed who wrote in a paragraph devoted to *Measure for Measure?* "There must have been an old law that prescribed the death penalty for the male if the woman became pregnant (*visibly*)." And what of the unblushing female who wrote apropos of the *Sonnets.* "The idea that Shakespeare was a homosexual is revealed to be a *phallicy.*" Equally interesting is the genius whose every utterance is a *world shaking* discovery. After an unusually banal comment on *Much Ado* one such student wrote: "P. S. if you publish this don't forget to give me credit." The comment and the student have been forgotten, but the postcript is immortal. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

The Good Old Days

Several weeks ago I had to resist the temptation of buying a fine Fourth Folio for the simple reason that I didn't have a thousand odd dollars in my wallet. (The Folio is still there if you want it.) But I was able to come away with sale catalogues of the libraries of Dr. Richard Farmer (1798) and George Steevens (1800). The latter was specially interesting because it was bound with the rare *Tabula Pretiorum* issued after the sale as a shilling pamphlet. Somehow, however, I wish the *Tabula* wasn't there for from it I learned that Steevens' copy of F4 had sold for only £2.2.6 —and that I might have picked up F1 for £22, F2 for £18.18, and F3 for £8.8. I would have bought a lot of early Quartos at 4 shillings and up, and I would not have wanted to pass up the 1622 Quarto of *Othello* at £29.8 and some other Q1's which sold for about £25 each. And who of us would not have purchased the 1609 edition of the Sonnets for about $20?

When Sam Johnson's books were sold in 1785 we might have obtained better bargains, but not as many. My facsimile of the excessively rare priced catalogue of that sale shows that F1 was sold to Samuel Ireland for £1.2, and his only other Folio, the third, was sold for a mere 11 shillings. But surely the biggest bargain must have been the mysterious lot bearing the cryptic description "12 vols. of Shakespeare's" which sold for 2s 6d!

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Query

Richard Warner's *Letter to David Garrick, Esq. Concerning a Glossary to the Plays of Shakespeare On a more extensive Plan than has hitherto appeared. To which is annexed a Specimen,* London, 1768, indicates that the author had read rather widely and was on the way to producing a monumental work. The "Specimen" includes only the letter "A", but according to Halliwell (*Shakespeariana,* 1841, p. 24), as recorded by Mullins in the catalogue of the Birmingham Shakespeare Library, the original manuscript is in the British Museum (MS Addit. 10,544) and the unpublished Glossary—consisting of 71 quarto and octavo volumes, is also preserved in the British Museum (MS. Addit. 10,472 to 10,542).

William Jaggard's *Shakespeare Bibliography,* 1911, dutifully records the existence of the MS but notes only that Lowndes "said" in was in the B.M. He goes on to say that "the British Museum Sh-catalogue does not mention it." Is it possible that 71 volumes of such value have disappeared?

I am also interested in locating an Anderson M. Baten, of Texas, I believe, who has in manuscript a 1500 page *Dictionary of Shakespeare.*

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Marchette Chute . . .

(*Continued from page* 1)

she said, was transition, but once that was found the rest was easy. The material on the sonnets was moved many times before she was satisfied that it was in the right part of the book.

That she has done her work well is testified to by the 200,000 copies sold by the Book of the Month Club. Professor Oscar J. Campbell praised this book in the *Saturday Review of Literature,* saying that Miss Chute has written "a learned, wise, and vastly entertaining book." The popularity of this book led her to write *An Introduction to Shakespeare* for young people which will be published shortly.

Just as Miss Chute's work on Chaucer gave her the London background necessary for her biography on Shakespeare, so has this book prepared her for the biography of Ben Jonson which is about half completed.

She turned down flatly my suggestion for a book on a woman—Queen Elizabeth. "I don't like her—she's too political. James I is interesting, but I cover him in Ben Jonson."

The suggestion that she do a book on a woman elicited the information that she had already completed a book on Elizabeth Barrett Browning which Dutton has read and would like to print. But Miss Chute is not satisfied with it and would want to rewrite it before publishing. She also refuses to publish her book on short story writing because she is convinced that there are no rules for that art form and the book would be misleading.

In spite of her phenomenal success in popularizing scholarly subjects and the sizable income tax she will pay this year, she still considers herself an amateur. She writes only because she thoroughly enjoys it. Considering herself as an intermediary between the scholar and the general reader, her aim is to "present the truth and to clarify." Selling her work is nice, but secondary. If she can make a man's life and work more comprehensible to her audience she is happy. What more can a writer ask?

Miss Chute has remarkable courage—a courage which she asserts is based on ignorance. She is not much concerned with what others are doing or have done because no two people do things in the same way. Her public has learned to respect her, but her publishers are still undecided. The publisher who accepted her *Search for God* after forty submissions elsewhere refused to take her *Geoffrey Chaucer of England;* and the publisher who accepted this work after rejections elsewhere would not take her *Shakespeare of London.* And it is the same abroad. She has three publishers here and three in England. And what more can a Professor ask?

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The Shakespeare Club of N. Y.

Miss June Justice presented a scholarly and well written analysis of *Macbeth* to the members of The Shakespeare Club of New York at its meeting in the National Arts Club on March 13th. Discussion of the paper and the play was lead by David S. Houston, Chairman of the Study Program, who strongly opposed the tradition that Shakespeare had at one time travelled with the players in Scotland. An excellent reading of the play followed with the eminent Shakespearean actor Charles Warburton in the role of Macbeth.

Mr. Arthur Heine, Chairman of the Dinner Committee announces that the Annual Dinner will be held at the Town Hall Club in N. Y. C. and that reservations are now being accepted.

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REVIEW of PERIODICALS

Taking as the "governing idea" of *All's Well* the concept that "Virtue is the true nobility," M. C. Bradbrook reevaluates the play and decides that it is not successful. "Helena's speech to the Countess is the poetic centre of the play, but the structural center is the king's judgment on virtue and nobility. For once, the dramatist and the poet in Shakespeare were pulling different ways." The conflict in the play is paralleled with a detailed study of the Elizabethan background of ideas. The ending of the play, "neither hypocritical nor cynical, can be granted only if the play is seen as a study of the question 'Wherein lies true honour and nobility?'" ("Virtue is the True Nobility," *The Review of English Studies, I* (New Series), pp. 289-301, Oct., 1950.)

Paul A. Jorgensen reviews the statements on Shakespeare's military knowledge and comes to the conclusion that most of them are not completely valid. Where Shakespeare seems to have erred as in making Othello both a General and Captain it is "not a blunder, but an effective dramatic synthesis." Shakespeare's significant use of military rank shows that military service and/or talking to discharged soldiers could not have given him the theoretical knowledge revealed in the plays. The portraits of Henry V, Othello, Richard III, Hotspur, Coriolanus, Falstaff, *et al.* reveal that Shakespeare must have read some of the several published treatises on military subjects and either used these "hand-book virtues" or violated them according to the dramatic effect he wished to produce. ("Military Rank in Shakespeare," *The Huntington Library Quarterly,* XIV, pp. 17-41, Nov. 1950.)

Paul Fatout of Purdue University believes that the line in *Macbeth* (II.2.40) "Great nature's second course," usually interpreted with the first course meaning food from its relationship to the next line, "Chief nourisher of life's feast," can also be interpreted with "course" meaning "manner of procedure." Thus the first course should be interpreted as death, the second is sleep. The line has a double sense fitting in *Macbeth* which is "full of repetitions and echoes." (*The Explicator,* IX:3,[item #22] Dec., 1950.)

Lawrence E. Bowling at the University of Kentucky realizes that on the surface *The Tempest* seems to be a romantic and "poetical dream" as Strachey called it, yet he finds it "one of the most intellectual and ideological of all Shakespeare's works." The key to the play is found in the speech on degree in *Troilus & Cressida.* In *The Tempest* we see the discord following the neglect of the specialty of rule. Practically every character is guilty of trying to break the great chain of being—to invert the natural order. The play is a treatise on government in which Gonzalo's commonwealth and Stephano's projected government are seen to be ineffectual. Prospero's early elevation of Caliban, and the masque which almost made him forget "the foul conspiracy" show that Prospero is still capable of error. But by the aid of the supernatural, all is restored. The tempest is not "a contrast" to the following action as Dover Wilson has observed, but symbolic of the whole play. Caliban and Ariel are introduced to show the lower and upper levels in the chain. When they are restored to their proper status, and Prospero to his, all ends well. They have "become harmoniously readjusted by returning to their proper positions in the natural order." ("The Theme of Natural Order in 'The Tempest,'" *College English,* XII, pp. 203-9, Jan., 1951.)

Romeo and Juliet is rather graphically illustrated in full color by seven paintings by Piotr Dimitri. The paintings are accompanied by a brief synopsis ("The Eternal Lovers", *Coronet,* pp. 45-52, Nov., 1950.)

In answer to its query of what Shakespearean quotation could most aptly be applied to Russia's position in the world of today, The Sunday *Times* (London) received the following lines from George D'Egville:

> Upon my tongues continual slanders ride,
> The which in every language I pronounce,
> Stuffing the ears of men with false reports.
> I speak of peace while covert enmity,
> Under the smile of safety, wounds the world.
> (*2 Henry IV,* Ind. 6-9)

Another reader (J. O. Young) sent in the lines from *King John,* "Be stirring as the time; be fire with fire..." (V.I. 48ff). (*Sat. Rev. of Lit.,* 13 Jan., p 39.)

The genre of "tyrant tragedy" (Cf. W. A. Armstrong, "The Elizabethan Concept of a Tyrant," *R.E.S.,* XXII, pp. 161-81, 1946, and *R.E.S.,* XXIV, pp. 19-35, 1948) is further developed by Paul N. Siegel who now includes Leontes among the tyrants. Leontes is not merely jealous as critics say "but a king whose inflamed passions must make him dash the social order to pieces in his frenzy." The play is similar to the tyrant tragedies except that Leontes' retribution shocks him back to normality. The author sees in the evil of Richard III "something external to ordinary humanity;" in *Macbeth* evil is ever-present—something which drags us down under circumstances favorable to it; in *The Winter's Tale* evil is considered as part of the order of things and from it "comes untold good"—Leontes emerges "into greater brightness and sunshine." We see that "the part which evil played in Shakespeare's vision of life changed," but Shakespeare always realized that evil meant "disorder and chaos in human nature, in society, in the universe." ("Leontes a Jealous Tyrant," *Review of English Studies,* I (New Series), pp. 302-7, Oct., 1950.)

J. C. Maxwell of King's College, Newcastle-on-Tyne, has counted and evaluated the use of possessive adjectives and pronouns as antecedants of relative clauses and notes that these constructions in Act I of *Titus Andronicus* conform to Peele's usage, not Shakespeare's. He therefore agrees with J. Dover Wilson in his edition of *Titus* to the effect that Act I is by Peele and the other acts by Shakespeare. ("Peele and Shakespeare; A Stylometric Test," *JEGP,* XLIX, pp. 557-61, Oct., 1950.)

An interesting note by Ruth H. Cline of Eastern Illinois State College adds a new meaning to Horatio's line "This lapwing runs away with the shell on his head" (V.2.193). She notes that the usual interpretation concerns the precocious lapwing and that the line is a reference to "Osric's juvenile self-sufficiency." (Kittredge, *16 Plays of Shakespeare.*) Miss Cline notes that Hamlet has twice asked Osric to put his hat on but is answered with polite refusal. After Osric has delivered the King's message he leaves—no doubt with his hat on his head. The line thus carries the triple significance—to the precocious lapwing which runs before its shell is off, to Orsic's precocity, and to his "bonnet." (*MLN,* LXVI, p. 40, Jan., 1951.)

Much disturbed by J.I.M. Stewart's *Character and Motive in Shakespeare* (1949) being called "a first-rate piece of criticism," E. E. Stoll writes a long review article showing what he believes are the vagaries of Stewart and improper criticism. He quotes Mr. Eastman who has said that the fault of such critics is not that they do not know how to think, but that they do not know how to read. "With them," says Prof. Stoll, "it is a matter of mind reading, the mind being not the author's." (*Mod. Phil.,* XLVIII, pp. 122-32, Nov. 1950.)

A note by "A.D." points out the similarity in tone and imagery of Shakespeare's sonnet #29 (When in disgrace...) and Sidney's #64 in *Astrophel and Stella* (Let fortune lay on me her worst disgrace). The writer will not go so far as to suggest that Shakespeare was consciously reworking Sidney, but does think the parallel worthy of note. He also strengthens T. W. Baldwin's argument that Shakespeare knew Lily's Latin Grammar by showing a connection between it and sonnet #104. (*Notes and Queries,* 6 Jan., pp. 5-6.)

April 1951 —

SHAKESPEARE SURVEY 4

Edited by
ALLARDYCE NICOLL

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The difference between manhood and valor is worked out by Eugene M. Waith of Yale and equated with Macbeth and Antony. Macbeth's "mental torment grows out of the conflict between man as the courageous male and the more inclusive concept of man as a being whose moral nature distinguishes him from the beasts." He is a "triumph for Lady Macbeth's ideal, for conscience is stifled." Antony's character rests on an antithesis: Caesar believes he is effiminate (I.4.3-7) and Cleopatra believes him a "demi-Atlas . . . a . . . man of men" (I.5.23:72). ("Manhood and Valor in Two Shakespearean Tragedies," *E.L.H.,* XVII, pp. 262-73, Dec., 1950.)

Romeo and Juliet is fraught with a "fate and premonition," says E. C. Pettet, which is remarkably revealed in its imagery. The use of star imagery is more than Petrarchan commonplace. Because "the play reflects the eternal struggle between Eros (Love and Life) and the forces of Death," it is not surprising that "images of strife, contrast, contradiction, and paradox" occur. The life and death struggle is found in the juxtaposition of womb and tomb, bridal bed and grave, the lover and death. The contrasts of light and darkness also indicate the theme of the play. ("The Imagery of *Romeo and Juliet,*" *English, The Magazine of the English Assn.,* VIII, pp. 121-6, Autumn, 1950.)

Kenneth Muir replies to Mr. Geoffrey Ashe's suggestion that parallels between William Strachey's sonnet "On Sejanus" and Shakespeare's *King Lear* do not necessarily mean that the authors collaborated. The Baconian R. L. Eagle notes that Strachey was a Cambridge man and that the scanting of sizes in Lear (II.4.178) should be considered in relation to the university language "proceeded . . . degrees . . . commence," in *Timon* (IV.3.252), and "commences . . . and act" in *2 Henry IV* (IV.3.125). (*Notes and Queries,* 6 Jan., pp. 5-6)